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THE DIALECTICS OF JAVANESE AND ISLAMIC CULTURES: AN INTRODUCTION TO KUNTOWIJOYO'S THOUGHT

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Abstract

The main idea of this paper is to show the attempts made by Kuntowijoyo, an Indonesian unrivalled great thinker, to synthesize Javanese and Islamic worldviews through his writings. Kuntowijoyo's thought is much influenced by his social circumstances. This manifested in the values, philosophies, and worldviews he was attempting to synthesize. One of Kuntowijoyo's concerns is demystification. In this context, it is not surprising that the presentation of mythical practices in Javanese society is somehow dominant. The presentation is not intended as an agreement, but rather as evidences on the irrationality of the myths. Another aspect that should be underlined is Sufism and transcendence. In this aspect, the synthesis of Javanese and Islamic elements are a bit more visible as represented in his novel *Khutbah di Atas Bukit* that is seen as that is seen as resemblance of *Kisah Dewa Ruci* in Javanese literature by many observers.

Key words: Dialectics, Javanese Society, Islamic Culture, Kuntowijoyo's Thought.

INTRODUCTION

It was in the late 1990s, as an undergraduate student in Islamic studies, that I came across Kuntowijoyo's work on Islamic thought for the first time. The book entitled *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi untuk Aksi* ((The Paradigm of Islam: Interpretation for Actions, 1991) provided me with valuable insight on the dynamics of Islam in Indonesia from a very rare point of view: a socio-historical perspective. As a young undergraduate student who was being trained in heavily descriptive and legal models of Islamic studies, reading and comprehending this book was a big challenge for me. However, despite the difficulty it entails, this book soon became one of my favourite academic

guidance and companions that paved the way for my more advanced intellectual journey. To put it metaphorically, the book is like dew that has unfailingly satisfied my intellectual thirst. The further I followed it, the more I felt challenged to digest its contents, and the more I became curious on the real identity of the author. My curiosity increased when another book by the same author was published. The book called *Identitas Politik Umat Islam* (Muslims' Political Identity, 1997) also offers critical analysis on contemporary Islamic issues in Indonesia, and more importantly, it elaborates the concept of *paradigma al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic paradigm) and proposes its adoption by Muslim scholars, especially in Indonesia. Some years later, other books on Islam were

also launched. *Muslim Tanpa Masjid* (Muslims without Mosques, 2001) employs transcendental structuralism as an approach to understand Islam and its dynamics; then *Selamat Tinggal Mitos Selamat Datang Realitas* (Good Bye Myths Welcome Realities, 2002) which critically interrogates mythical tendencies of Indonesian society; and *Islam sebagai Ilmu* (Islam as Science, 2004) as a counter discourse to the Islamization of science that was a major trend in Indonesia during 1990s and early 2000s.

My intellectual journey continued, and I was trapped in a puzzle upon finding a novel called *Pasar* (Market), which actually published earlier in 1972, that bear Kuntowijoyo's name as the author. Not only this title, in the literature rack of a bookstore, the author's name also appeared on many other literary works in the forms of novels: *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* (Sermon on the Hill), *Mantra Pejina Ular* (The Mantra of Snake Tamer) and *Wasripin dan Satinah* (Wasripin and Satinah); anthology of short stories such as *Dilarang Mencintai Bunga-Bunga* (Don't Love the Flowers), *Hampir Sebuah Subversi* (Almost a Crime); collections of poetry: *Daun Makrifat Makrifat Daun, Isyarat, Suluk Awang-Uwung*, and drama scenario such as *Topeng Kayu* (The Wooden Mask). As a very young student –and later fresh graduate-- struggling to find intellectual role models, this fact very much bothered my mind and consequently attracted many questions. Who is Kuntowijoyo? Is the author of these

literary works the same as the works on Islamic studies that I have seen earlier? Or is this another Kuntowijoyo? While I was still in the state of confusion, in other occasions of visiting bookstores in several places in Indonesia, Kuntowijoyo also appeared as an author for many books on history and social issues. Such titles as *Dinamika Sejarah Umat Islam* (1985), *Budaya dan Masyarakat* (1987), *Demokrasi dan Budaya Birokrasi* (1994), *Mengusir Matahari, Fabel-fabel Politik* (1999), *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah* (2001), *Radikalisasi Petani: Esai-esai Sejarah Kuntowijoyo* (2002), *Perubahan Sosial dalam Masyarakat Agraris: Madura 1850-1940* (2002), and *Raja, Priyayi dan Kawula: Surakarta 1900-1915* (2004) also bear his name as the writer. However, by the passage of time, this puzzle was resolved and I am no longer curious on identity of the author; although curiosity on the thought of the author is always part of my intellectual adventure up to the present day. Surely, it has now been revealed that Kuntowijoyo is a name with different identities. He is an historian, poet, novelist, academic, Muslim thinker and what in Indonesian term called *budayawan* (culturalist/artist). Both in literary and non-literary fields, Kuntowijoyo has produced very fascinating writings and many of them are award-winners. In the words of A.E. Priyono (1991), the editor of *Paradigma Islam*, Kuntowijoyo is known for writing technique with very rigorous syntaxes and accurate dictions, and this made his writings very unique and extraordinary. As has been clear from preceding paragraphs,

Kuntowijoyo wrote extensively through various medium such as novel, roman, poetry, fable, and academic works. His writings covered wide array of topics ranging from history, culture, social movements, politics, and Islam. Among many of his brainchild, Kuntowijoyo is well-known for his “Prophetic” and “Transcendental Structuralism” theories. These theories were applied to many of his analysis and writings and have led to the emergence of what he labelled *Ilmu Sosial Profetik* (Prophetic Social Sciences) and *SastraProfetik* (Prophetic Literature). In addition, examination and analysis on Kuntowijoyo’s thought will also uncover a fact that he is influenced by three important elements that shape the whole structure of his philosophy, namely Javanese values and culture, Islamic values and worldviews, and Western theories. In this relation, this article will only trace the dialectics of Javanese and Islamic elements in Kuntowijoyo’s thought by analysing some of his literary works and his writings in issues of Islam and history.

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

In order to understand Kuntowijoyo’s idea, it is fundamental to trace his Javanese and Islamic orientations through his family background. As written by the late Wan Anwar (2007), Kuntowijoyo’s father was a *dalang* (shadow puppets player) and a chanter of *macapat* (traditional Javanese style poetry); while his great-grandfather was a *khattath* (the writer of Arabic script, especially al-Qur’an). Since his childhood, Kuntowijoyo’s interest in arts was already prominent.

In the primary school age, he learned story-telling and poetry-reading with two important Indonesian artists at the time, M. Saribi Arifin and Yusmanan. Also, as many children in traditional Javanese Muslim society in general, Kuntowijoyo also spent his days learning the Qur’an in the *surau* and mosques.

For many people, a name may not mean anything. But this may be different in Kuntowijoyo’s case, as the name clearly shows his identity. At least for other people, this name is already seen as a marker. Suwardi (2007), a Javanologist based in Yogyakarta State University, for example, asserts that the name is very typically Javanese, and for such a reason, it is really not coincidental that Kuntowijoyo was significantly influenced by Javanese cultures and worldviews. Furthermore, he informs that the name “Kuntowijoyo” reminds him to a character in the *dunia pewayangan* (the shadow puppet story). *Kunto* is the name of a weapon owned by Adipati Karno, a figure described as bestowed with noble and honourable behaviour; and by referring to Kuntowijoyo’s versatile intellectual ability, this character is clearly manifested in Kuntowijoyo’s personality, concludes Suwardi.

Furthermore, socio-cultural context where Kuntowijoyo was born and raised should also be understood, since Javanese inclination in his thought cannot be separated from his background as a person who was raised in a milieu with predominantly Javanese culture. He was born in

Yogyakarta on September 18, 1943. Yogyakarta is the heart of Javanese culture along with Surakarta which also shaped considerable influence to his thought. In his *Raja, Priyayi dan Kawula*, a book that traces the dynamics of Surakarta Kingdom in 1900-1915, for instance, Kuntowijoyo (2004a: xi) informed that among reasons led him to the writing of this book is emotional, namely his mystical attachment to Surakarta. "There is a feeling of romantic journey to the past when (I) read archives, newspapers, and literary works on Solo," he acknowledged.

In this context, mentioning something more about Yogyakarta is inevitable. Yogyakarta is a city of unique combination. In addition to be the central site of Javanese cultures, both symbolically and substantially (that among other things is featured by its mystical and syncretic tendencies), Yogyakarta is also the birth place as well as home base for the largest modern Islamic organization in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah, that campaigns for the elimination of syncretic practices of Islam. In the past, it is believed that the concept of *Keraton* (palace) of Yogyakarta was based on the combination of Javanese mysticism and the concept of *wali* in Islamic Sufism (Solikhin, 2009: 4). On Yogyakarta culture, Emha Ainun Nadjib (Cak Nun), an Indonesian established and often controversial artist, draws a description by referring to the sweetness of Yogyakarta culinary as an analogy. It is widely known that the people of Yogyakarta love sweet

food. More than merely a culinary preference, in Cak Nun's account, this fact symbolizes a high euphemism culture that constitutes one of the most fundamental values of Yogyakarta's ways of life (Nadjib, 1999: 21). It is the philosophy of sweetness that made Yogyakarta people to be very euphemistic, in the sense that concealing the real feeling for the sake of other people's comfort has very much been embedded in their life. Just for examples, although they are miserable, they would smartly hide the sorrow behind the laughter. Likewise, when getting angry, they are taught to politely manage the anger and resentment behind a bunch of smile.

Although Kuntowijoyo was able to take proportional position between these two contradictory poles, he himself and his works are reflections of Yogyakarta's unique cultural and religious blended identities. In addition to be very Javanese, Kuntowijoyo was also an active member of Muhammadiyah. More or less, this involvement also contributed to the formation of rational Islamic element in Kuntowijoyo's thought, and it is this rationality that led him to be a loyal yet critical member of Muhammadiyah. One of his criticism is that Muhammadiyah is a cultural movement but without culture (Kuntowijoyo, 1995). For this reason, Kuntowijoyo (2000) suggested Muhammadiyah to adopt a program of *menghias Islam* or decorating Islam with cultural elements, or enriching Islamic practices with cultural components. In his views, the rational and puritan types of Islam

practiced and promoted by Muhammadiyah have been “on the right track”. But, under Muhammadiyah’s orientation, Islam has become culturally “poor, dry, quiet and low appetite”. By so doing, Kuntowijoyo was actually seeking to synthesize the doctrine of rational Islam with culture, as both should not be contradicted.

For Kuntowijoyo, writing has been part of his life. He had been writing since his time as a university student at GadjahMada University (UGM), Yogyakarta, where he obtained his degree in history (1969). During his time as student, he founded a *Lembaga Kebudayaan dan Seniman Islam* and *Studi Group Mantika* which significantly contributed in the maturation process of his intellectualism. In the followings years, Kuntowijoyo’s Javanese background was then enriched with Western elements through his studies at University of Connecticut, United States, where he completed his master in American history (1974) and Columbia University which conferred him a Ph.D in history (1980) with a thesis on the history of Madura. The influence of his Western training is very significant in which he was very enthusiastic in transplanting such theories as Thomas Kuhn’s paradigm, Peter Berger’s objectivication and Levi Strauss’ structuralism into Islamic thought. Even in reading Javanese culture that he was very much involved, Kuntowijoyo often referred to Western scholars such as Niels Mulder and J.J. Ras. Suwardi (2007) criticised this attitude by arguing that Kuntowijoyo

has been much influenced by an assumption on superiority and rigorousness of studies conducted by Westerners and the inferiority of studies by indigenou. Kuntowijoyo passed away in 22 February 2005 in Yogyakarta. Indonesia has lost one of its great thinkers.

BETWEEN MYTH AND REALITY

Among many possible methods to understand Kuntowijoyo’s thought is by looking at how he perceived and treated realities. As an historian and literati, his writings are featured by their strong reference to realities, on the one hand, and its strong advocacy to leave myths, on the other. He believed that both history and literature are based on facts, although they treat realities differently. History as a science, Kuntowijoyo argued, lives in the midst of realities. Its task, therefore, is to reconstruct realities. Literature, on the other hand, exists in the world of imaginations, and its task is to express those imaginations (Kuntowijoyo, 2004b: 17). Although literary is mostly imaginary, Kuntowijoyo believes that imaginations never come from the void and none of them are value-free. Rather, it is sedimentation of factual experiences whether with an author as a subject of certain events or as a witness of events. Therefore, in analysing Kuntowijoyo’s literary works, it has to be taken into account three principles that lay the foundation for them. Those are: the structuration of experience, the structuration of imagination, and the structuration of messages (Anwar, 2007). These three elements are inseparable. As for experiential

component, Kuntowijoyo's encounter with mythical mind-set of Javanese is a good example. Being surrounded by mythical orientation of Javanese culture, Kuntowijoyo paid significant attention to the myths in many of his writings, both literary and academic, not to glorify or preserve them, but to show the irrationality of the myths and then call for demystification. On imagination, Kuntowijoyo set forth that a well-structured imagination will be able not only to deliver important messages, but also stimulate others' intellectual journey. In Kuntowijoyo's words, reading a good short story is like experiencing intellectual and emotional adventures, something that cannot be attained through any other medium (Kuntowijoyo, 1999: x).

Now, let us analyse some pieces of his literary works to get a more factual description of this theoretical formulae. The short story entitled *Anjing-anjing Menyerbu Kuburan* (Dogs Attacking the Tomb, 1997) is a good example. Here, Kuntowijoyo showed the myth on the sacredness of certain days in the context of Javanese beliefs. It tells about a thief who was pursuing a ritual to strengthen his mystical power and to reach a constant richness. The ritual is biting the ears of a dead who died on *Selasa Kliwon* (*Selasa*, Thursday is one of the days in universal calendar, while *Kliwon* is one of the days in Javanese cosmological system). When a villager passed away on that mystical day, he did not want to miss this opportunity. On the side of villagers, being aware of the potential

of the dead being targeted by mystical prowess seekers, during nights, they gathered in a hut by side of the cemetery turn by turn to guard the grave.

However, the thief was not less intelligent in anticipating this situation. From his master, he obtained an amulet in the form of yellow rice believed to be able to sedate people. The amulet worked very effectively. When it was sown to cemetery guardians, they fell asleep one by one. He approached the small hut where the falling asleep villagers gathered and tried to awaken some of them to make sure that they were really sleeping. When he was convinced, he started digging the new tomb by his bare hands. Although he felt pain on his both hand that started to bleed, his imagination of richness and magical power gave him strength to ignore the feeling. He continued digging and found that taking the body out of the grave was not an easy task. When he was finally able to lift the body and nearly bite the ears; a dog, a very weird, unusual, mysterious dog attacked him. He fought the dog. But, rather than running away, another dog came, and finally seven dogs were there to attack him. Now he forgot the dead's ears and focusing on fighting the dogs. Inevitably, the fight created noise that finally awakened the villagers. As soon as they realized what was happening, the villagers run to the tomb and found a man fighting seven dogs. The dogs run away left the man in pain, bleeding. Some of them believed that the man has been fighting to save the tomb, while others accused the man as a criminal

trying to steal the magical power of the dead. The story mysteriously ended here.

Similarly, in other short story of *Segenggam Tanah Kuburan* (A Handful of Tomb Soil), Kuntowijoyo depicted the myth of *tanahkuburan* (tomb soil) as the most sacred weapon owned by a thief named Kliwon. The story tells that the thief never failed in stealing villagers' wealth. Not only tomb soil, this thief also equipped himself with any other "weapons" such as dog and horoscope. This made him confident in stealing villagers' wealth, especially those who just sold their cows in the day. But on one night, Kliwon's action was unsuccessful, since an old man was singing the spiritual *tembang* (Javanese songs) all night long. Kliwon wait for the old man to fall asleep and stop the *tembang*, but the old man kept singing till the dawn. The thief just realized that his magic was unable to subdue the old man's charisma. At about the same time, Kliwon also heard a baby crying which for him means another disaster, as one of the taboos of his magic is hearing baby crying or screaming. Finally, he surrendered and decided to retreat with a feeling of embarrassment that during his life, this is the first time his plan was failed.

From these stories, it is evident that while Kuntowijoyo was going to show how some kinds of myths are still maintained by certain groups of Javanese society, at the same time, his prime concern was demystifying them. The failure of both thieves is a metaphor that all kinds of myth are irrational, abstract, and illusive. The

fight between the thief and seven dogs in the first story basically represents the competition among evils that is always part of history of human beings. The response of the thief to the dogs and his hesitance to accomplish the mission symbolize an inner psychological conflict between good and bad impulses which always exist in all human beings. Religiously speaking, intrinsically, the sin-doers are usually haunted by guilty feeling and fear of their own deeds, and this feeling is a key factor that leads to the failure as well. The reality is symbolized by awakening villagers who witnessed the fighting but then involved in a dispute over the position of the dog fighter. The dispute among villagers symbolizes the fact that in the face of realities, myths have been differently perceived, even in an age where technology has been part of human beings' daily life. Kuntowijoyo (2002: 95) believed that technology does not necessarily mean de-mythology. Similarly, *tanahkuburan* as a magic amulet is a myth, and it was defeated by spirituality symbolised by old man's *tembang* and a baby's cry that represented the holiness (*fitrah*) of human being. It cannot be denied that the demystification messages of these stories are very visible.

In the real life, paradoxes are there, however. The demystification processes have been sought for decades. But at the same time, myths are maintained, even by educated class of society. Kuntowijoyo presented a fact that in 2000 (not 1900, he emphasized), GadjahMada University in Yogyakarta

conducted a *ruwatan* (a Javanese-styled cleansing and blessing ceremony to avoid bad destiny to both individuals and communities). In his view, this is an evident example of a betrayal done by an institution that should uphold scientific endeavours. There is another paradox. After one century of its reform movement, only hundreds meters from Muhammadiyah's headquarter in Yogyakarta or tens meters from the Kampung Kauman, the birth site of Muhammadiyah, the sacralisation of the myth is taking place. People believe that the residual water being used to wash the *Keraton's* scarts are sacred and blessing (Kuntowijoyo, 2002: 110-11). Although it is a real paradox, when *Keraton's* religious life is considered, a good reason can be obtained. As Simuh (2003: 140) reveals that since the Hindu era, royal elites' religiosity is always artificial, since it is politics that become their real religion.

In Kuntowijoyo's view, a myth-based society is featured by two traits: a) a tendency to avoid realities by employing and even exploiting symbols; and b) preferring the abstract entities over the concrete ones. If only Kuntowijoyo is still alive, his anxiety of the myth being practiced by educated and technologically literate people would only increase. Only earlier this year, the Minister of State-owned Enterprises of the Republic of Indonesia, Dahlan Iskan, performed a *ruwatan* ceremony for an electrical car before it is officially launched, to avoid the bad luck. Paradoxically, while *ruwatan* had been conducted, only a

few hours later, the car was totaled in an accident.

SUFISM AND TRANSCENDENCE

Another salient feature of Kuntowijoyo's writing is his inclination toward the synthesis of Islam and Java through Sufism. In his novel *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* (A Sermon on the Hill), the domination of mystical elements are very clear. The novel sets a story about an old man named Barman who struggling to grasp and reflect the meaning of life and how life should be. Barman represented a phenomenon of modern men who experience existential and spiritual crisis. His wife passed away when his son, Bobi, was still very young, but he never got married again for the sake of Bobi's mental development. Barman was a diplomat who spent most of his life in Paris. Upon his return to Indonesia, he run a printing company that made him materially more prosperous. The material abundance, however, did not bring happiness to him. Aware of bad situation his father was facing, Bobi arranged a new life in a villa on a hill for Barman accompanied by a young beautiful lady chosen by Bobi. But, this did not make Barman happy either, and although he initially praised the perfectness of the lady, he gradually turned to a more fundamental question of what is the nature of life and started to ignore Popi, his young beautiful lady.

In the situation of confusion and uncertainty, Barman met a man named Humam that to his surprise is like the mirror of himself. They became good friends and discussed the purpose of life.

Barman found wisdom in every Humam's word and started to "fall in love" with his principles. Humam told him about existence. "Our existence is our non-existence," Humam said. One day, Humam died mysteriously and Barman went down from the hill to a traditional market telling people on the Humam's death. Since then he befriended with the marketers. After Humam's death, Barman moved the Humam's house that was inherited to him and completely left Popi, forbid her to come to the house, even only for sending him some food. Barman spent his time contemplated between the trees and flowers of the hill accompanied by his white horse that was sent by his son Bobi, on his request. He frequently visited market and talk to the marketers until one day he asked them to join him climbing the top of the hill promising them an important message. When the top of the hill has been reached, the people asked him to speak. Barman stopped, remained riding his horse and spoke to them: "This is my sermon. This life is useless to be continued. Kill yourself..." Barman decided to commit suicide by jumping down along with his horse to the cliff.

Abdul Hadi WM (2005), an Indonesian poet, interprets the hill in this novel is Kaliurang, a mountainous resort area close to Merapi Mountain. Merapi is one of the most important spiritual sites in Yogyakarta, and Java in general, and plays important role in Javanese cosmology (see Trijoto, 1996; Triyoga, 1991; and Anshoriy, 2008). More fundamentally, Kuntowijoyo expressed his messages

using mystical term and narratives both from Islamic and Javanese heritages. According to Hadi, *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* resembles Javanese and Malay Sufism literary heritages. The presence of Barman and his "twin" Humam, remind people to the similar narrative in Javanese *Serat Dewa Ruci* (The Story of Dewa Ruci) or Malay *Hikayat Inderapura*. Symbolically, the journey to the hill can be interpreted as a spiritual journey from the lower place to the higher one. Hadi identifies that the metaphor of climbing the hill was also used by Hamzah Fansuri in his poetry, something that Kuntowijoyo was very familiar with.

Although there are possible resemblances in Javanese and Malay Sufi literature, Javanese and Malay experiences of synthesis with Islam are fundamentally different. Simuh (2003) asserted that in Minangkabau and Malay cases, the encounters with Islam have created a rhythmic and synthetic form of Islam. In contrast, the dialectic of Islam and Javanese culture has resulted in the syncretic form of Islam. However, Simuh suggested, that this social process has to be analysed very carefully. He maintained that the syncretism as well as synthesis would be very relative. In a Javanese case, if it is seen from the perspective of pure Islam, the dialectical relationships of Islam and Javanese culture would be syncretic. In contrast, the Javanese perspective would perceive this assimilation is as a harmonious synthesis (Simuh, 2003; Sholihin, 2009).

Different from *Khotbah di Atas Bukit*, in the short story of *Sepotong Kayu untuk Tuhan* (A Piece of Wood for God) Kuntowijoyo emphasized prophetic and transcendental aspects of Islam. As in many other stories, Kuntowijoyo presented old man as the character. The presence of this character is a symbol of wisdom and maturity. *Sepotong Kayu untuk Tuhan* is a story about an old man living with his wife in a very remote hamlet. Although he lived happy life, he felt burdened by his wife's attitude who always ordered him to do many things. One day, his wife went to their son's house and he felt that it is time to be relaxed. He enjoyed the day like never before. But, suddenly he remembered that the people in his hamlet were building a small mosque. He thought of contribution that he could pay to the mosque. But, what should be paid? All of his money was with his wife who left nothing to him except some kilos of rice and small sum of money for vegetables. Then he remembered that he owned a jackfruit tree that was already very old, and he wanted to give the wood to the mosque.

But he could not cut down the tree himself. He finally found the way. He asked a wood cutter to accomplish the job and will give unused parts of the tree as the reward. The cutter agreed and did the job for three days. When the wood was ready, the old man told the cutter that he would deliver the wood by the most secret way he could as he didn't wanted to spoil his sincerity by exhibiting his good deed to other people. After sunset, both men went to

the river just behind the garden and then floated the wood following the river flows until they reached a place close the land where the mosque was being built. They lifted the wood from the river and put it by side of the river between the bush and trees. The old man planned to deliver the wood by his own hand to the mosque tomorrow morning before the dawn, so nobody will know who has sent the wood and he would write on top of the wood: "A Piece of Wood for God". In the following morning, he went through the darkness towards the place where he stored the wood. But how disappointed he was upon realising that the wood he prepared for the mosque was gone. Flood in the night has floated his wood and ruined his plan. In the sadness, he murmured: "God, will the wood come to you?"

The old man's attitude towards his wandering wood is parallel to the concept of *ikhlas* (sincerity) and *niat* (intention) in Islamic context which will be impossible to achieve in the absence of transcendental awareness. This story is also clearly parallel to the concept of *qurban* in Islam. In a popular *hadith* (Prophet's saying) regarding animal sacrifice (*ibadah qurban*), it is stated that God will not get the blood or the meat of the sacrificed animals. Rather, He will look into the *niat* (intention) and *al-ikhlas* (sincerity). The transcendental and prophetic aspects of this story may not as visible as demystification messages in any other stories. But, when the old man whispered to himself, "God, will the wood come to you?" soon it

underlined the transcendental orientation of the old man. The old man might have regretted, as he finally could not send his wood physically to the “house of God”. But his whisper can also be read as a belief that God will not ignore his intention and will reward him accordingly. As briefly mentioned before, “prophetic” is one of the keyword to understand Kuntowijoyo’s thought that can be applied to social sciences and literature works. Kuntowijoyo (2001: 267-368) described three pillars on which the Prophetic Social Sciences is built: *humanisasi* (humanizing human), *liberasi* (liberation) and *transendensi* (orientation toward the transcendent one); which can be found, through careful reading, from many of his works, both literary and non-literary.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main idea of this paper is to show the attempts made by Kuntowijoyo, and Indonesian unrivalled great thinker, to synthesize Javanese and Islamic worldviews through his writings. As has been clear from previous discussions, Kuntowijoyo’s thought is much influenced by his social circumstances. Yogyakarta as the heart of Javanese culture which also blended with Islamic elements is one of dominant force in shaping Kuntowijoyo’s thought. This manifested in the values, philosophies, and worldviews he was attempting to synthesize. In this paper, I have presented that one of Kuntowijoyo’s concerns is demystification. In this context, it is not surprising that the

presentation of mythical practices in Javanese society is somehow dominant. The presentation is not intended as an agreement, but rather as evidences on the irrationality of the myths. Another aspect that should be underlined is Sufism and transcendence. In this aspect, the synthesis of Javanese and Islamic elements are a bit more visible as represented in his novel *Khutbah di Atas Bukit* that is seen as resemblance of *Kisah Dewa Ruci* in Javanese literature by many observers.

Last but not least, I am fully aware that this brief paper should not be treated as an introduction to the whole philosophy of Kuntowijoyo’s thought. However, I do hope that this will be an introduction (introduction in its literal meaning) to go further into Kuntowijoyo’s world for those who feel that this thinker is worthy to be studied, and I would say he is.

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